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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 001159

SIPDIS

NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KISL](#) [KU](#) [BIDOOON](#)
SUBJECT: BIDOOON KEPT AWAY FROM CANCELED PARLIAMENT SESSION
ON STATELESS RIGHTS

REF: KUWAIT 1154

Classified By: PolCouns Pete O'Donohue for reasons 1.4 b and d

¶1. (U) On December 10, the Kuwaiti parliament failed to hold a planned session on a bill to extend education and healthcare benefits to the country's 100,000 Bidoon (stateless residents who assert rights to Kuwaiti citizenship). Parliament Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi canceled the session at exactly 9:30AM, citing that the assembled MPs were two short of the 33 required for quorum, despite the fact that several MPs were still trickling in. Later that day, the Kuwait Human Rights Society (KHRS) NGO issued a statement on their website demanding that a new session be scheduled as soon as possible to ratify the bill and end, "the Bidoon's misery that has lasted for too long."

¶2. (C) On the morning of the planned session, police cordoned off all roads leading to the National Assembly and PolOff observed officers checking civil IDs and allowing only a handful of cars through. KHRS Board Member Amer Al-Tameemi, one of the few non-MPs who managed to reach the parliament building, told the Embassy that he believed it was obvious that the GOK used the police cordons to prevent Bidoon from congregating outside the National Assembly and expressed his disappointment that MPs were not more serious about the issue and showed up late. Shaheer Al-Subairi, an activist for stateless persons' rights who is himself Bidoon, told the Embassy that several Bidoon activists had planned to hold a large rally across from the parliament but were pressured by the GOK to cancel it. Tribal MP (who stand the most to gain if tribal Bidoons are given citizenship and hence voting rights) understandably followed the issue closely: provocateur MP Musallam Al-Barrak, who grilled Interior Minister Shaykh Jaber Al-Khalid Al Sabah in June, groused to local daily Al-Qabas that he suspected the Interior Minister had arranged for the Bidoon parliamentary session to have insufficient attendance to ensure its cancellation.

¶3. (C) Comment: Having skillfully navigated the political rapids of the closed-door grilling of the PM and three government ministers December 8, many observers here hope there will be smooth sailing ahead, with the government able to move forward vigorously on long overdue major infrastructure projects and legislation without further parliamentary roiling of the waters. While this newfound optimism may prove short-lived in any case (and may presume a level of potential government energy and leadership not obviously in evidence), it appears that when it came to the parliamentary session on the Bidoon, the GOK was not prepared to offer its tribalist detractors a platform from which to launch yet another divisive and fractious debate -- certainly not so soon after its December 8 "victory."

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